

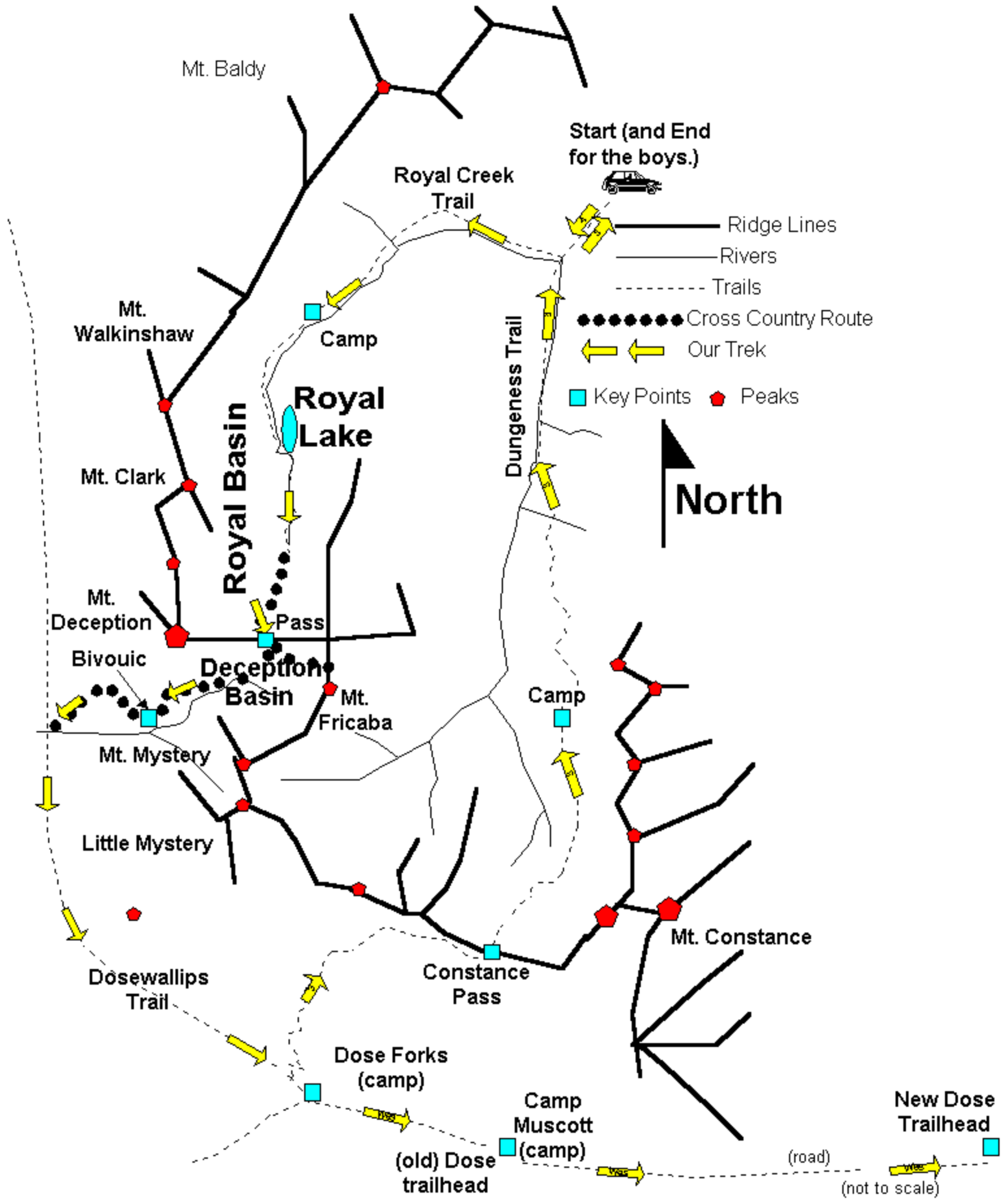
## **Deception Basin Loop, Olympic National Park,**

approximately 40 miles, July 16 to 21, 2003

This was one of the most intense hikes I've ever done! That intensity was further complicated by my age -- I may be getting too old for the cross country parts of backpacking, as Shon has been telling me for a long time. Still, we experienced some absolutely wonderful scenery in country that is rarely seen, even by devoted backpackers. Off-trail travel continues to offer its rewards.

This trek was "designed" to be a loop trip. We would start on the Dungeness River on Washington's Olympic Peninsula, hike up the river and eventually enter Olympic National Park, a favorite haunt of mine. (I have over 700 miles "logged" on the trails of the region.) We would hike through Royal Basin, a region known both for scenery and for rock climbing. At the head of the basin (south end) we would cross an un-named pass into rarely visited Deception Basin. A climb of Mt. Friciba was planned as an option. We would then continue down Deception Creek, traveling cross country, until we reached the Dosewallips River trail. We would follow this for a while until we encountered the Constance Pass trail. An ascent of this would take us over the pass and back to the Dungeness River trail, which we would follow back to the trailhead. The loop was completed, although not without greater adventure than originally planned.

Our proposed loop is outlined in the following map:



The trip was originally configured to follow one that Roger did with college friends, Brian Bishop and Ken Millard. Two years ago the three of them hiked a 70 mile section of the Pacific Crest Trail in Oregon. They had decided to do a trip in the Olympics this year and had allotted nearly a week for the

effort. Later in the process they invited me to come along. At first I declined the invitation, suggesting that my slower pace would hold them back. But they insisted that this would not occur. (Were they wrong with this evaluation?)

Day 1. We drove up Interstate 5 and then US101 to the outskirts of Sequim and proceeded SW on logging roads until reaching a large parking lot at the trailhead. We then started the hike south, following the Dungeness River for only a mile before branching off on the Royal Creek trail, headed toward Royal Basin. We camped after having covered a mere 3 miles or so, for camp sights were sparsely located in this stretch.

Day 2. We continued the trek toward Royal Basin, reaching Royal Lake near lunch time. We found a bench above the lake for lunch and enjoyed the views.



Royal Lake

After lunch we proceeded up through the basin, passing luxurious meadows laced with meandering creeks, surrounded by the numerous peaks of the Needles. As we moved higher we encountered more snow. A smaller lake appeared near the head of the basin, still with numerous inviting camp spots available in the trees or rocks.



background.

Tarn at upper end of Royal Basin, Mt. Clark in



(Roger Hayward photo) The view toward the head of the basin shows the snow slopes we climbed to cross the ridge at about 6600 ft. The snow slopes were not difficult, although the steepness caused Brian to slip out and fall about 100 ft. The previous demonstrations of ice ax technique paid off and allowed him to arrest his fall while



suffering no more than minor abrasions from the afternoon snow.



This is the view that greeted us when we reached the ridge crest above Royal Basin. The peak is Mt. Mystery. Note the ice bound lake at the base of the Mystery Glacier. The region on the north side of Mt. Mystery is known as Deception Basin and is one of the more remote parts of the eastern Olympic Mountains.

An easy descent over shale and and scree brought us to a camp for the night in the meadows of the basin.



Roger and I used Gortex Bivy bags instead of a tent, allowing us to drop our sleeping bags in any convenient spot.

Day 3. We arose to the sun poking over the ridges to the east. After a hasty breakfast, we headed up the hill, hoping to catch the ridges next to Mt. Friciba. By now we had agreed not to take the time to do the climb.



Here Roger photographs part of the basin below. Mt. Deception appears in the background with part of the Olympus massif hiding behind.

After cresting out at 6900 ft, only 300 ft below the top of Friciba but still 700 and 900 ft down from Mystery and Deception, we headed back to our high camp. We took a little time to glissade the snow slopes we had climbed, yet another new experience for Brian and Ken. We ate some lunch and broke camp to begin our descent into the valley, toward the Dose trail. The basin was flat near the outlet, but immediately became steep as we passed the stream outlet.



This is the view looking back up toward the edge of Deception Basin. The steep rock slopes were generally stable, although there were many rogue rocks waiting to send us tumbling. Careful plodding through the area kept the tumbles and bumps to a minimum. Later in the afternoon we encountered slide alder, surely the greatest curse to the Olympic cross country traveler. Our original plan called for us to reach the Dosewallips River by nightfall, but it soon became clear that this was not going to happen. Instead, we set a goal of merely reaching the confluence of the two branches of Deception Creek. While we realized this goal, it was nightfall by the time it happened. We were all so exhausted from the off trail, up and down travel that we crashed,



eating only a bit of trail food for our "dinner."

Day 4. We awoke refreshed and anxious to continue toward the Dose. But the adversity continued. We were now in heavy forest for most of the time, usually on steep hillsides. Numerous ravines caused us to climb upward even when our goal was the valley a thousand feet below. All of this was further complicated by heavy windfall. We fought our way through this for half of the day with poor progress. Then, early in the afternoon we encountered some good luck in discovering a climber's way trail for Mt. Deception. We began to follow it, finding our way along the slightly worn path through the brush, clarified by an occasional blaze on the trees or a scrap of orange plastic marker tape. We lost the trail a couple of times due to windfall, but managed to find it again after study of the map and guesses about where the trail might logically go.



The terrain finally becomes flat and the altimeter indicates that we are almost at the Dose. Here's a photo (by Roger) of yours truly, relieved to finally be very close to the destination after fighting our way through the woods and slopes for more than a 24 hour period.

But the day was not over. If there was any possibility of making it out to the car in the allotted time, we had to get to a camping spot by nightfall that was close to the base of the Constance Pass trail. The only promising camp place was at Dose Forks, 6.4 miles below the place where Deception Creek cross the Dosewallips trail. When we finally popped out of the woods on the Dose trail, we went to the small camp area at Deception Creek and cooked dinner. We also guzzled a large quantity of lemonade, enjoying the refreshment that came with the necessary rehydration. Ken and I also worked on our feet, applying a lot of "Moleskin." After a larger than normal mountain dinner, a needed rest, and a period of mental relaxation, we again hit the trail. Although it was nominally downhill, we encountered some up-and-down sections as well as some rocky stretches, now antagonizing our blistered feet. But the hike went well. We pulled into Dose Forks a bit after 10 PM, by now using headlamps to find our way down the trail. We crashed and slept well that night.

Day 5. We are now at a critical decision point. The trail distance to the car is just under 16 miles,

certainly a reasonable distance to cover in two remaining days. However, the elevation gain is substantial. Dose Forks is at 2100 ft while the Constance Pass trail crosses Del Monte Ridge at 6500 ft, leaving a 4400 ft elevation gain, and that must be accomplished in the first of the two remaining days. This was daunting, but possible for the "kids," but it sounded nearly impossible for this 64 year old coot. I was just not up to this walk. So we decided to split the party. I would take the heavy climbing gear that the guys had carried (and fortunately, never used) and hike out the Dosewallips while they continued the walk to the car by way of Constance Pass. (Some might question the wisdom of hiking alone. First, I've done a great deal of solo hiking, so this is not new. Several hundred miles of that solitary walking even happened in the Olympics. Also, there are other hikers on this trail, so one is not really alone here.)

Dose forks is close to the old trailhead at Muscott Flat. But the road was destroyed by a flood at a point about 5.5 miles away, so the hike is now considerably longer than it was in earlier times. The road was completely destroyed, and it's not clear when or even if it will ever be replaced. The rest of the day was purposefully slow and relaxed for me. I spent several hours at Dose Meadows and then did the casual hike down to Muscott Flat. The old campground was very pleasant, now that it is nearly deserted. The only residents are other hikers on their way to or from the high country. Even in the past, a rougher than normal road precluded folks from taking trailers or RVs into the area, generating a more rustic and quiet atmosphere. It was even better this time!

While I was doing little, the three other guys were climbing the long trail up to Constance Pass. I've vowed to do that walk some time.



Brian and Ken crossing a creek in Sunnybrook Meadow, part of the way up to Constance Pass.





The view from Sunnybrook Meadow.



Brian and Roger, finally on Del Monte Ridge.

Day 6. The last day was generally uneventful. I did the 5.5 mile hike out to a small camping area adjacent to the road washout on the Dosewallips River. The three younger guys had camped at a spot on a feeder creek, still well above the Dungeness, about 7 miles from the trailhead. All of us got up early to get started in the cool of the morning; we were all hiking by 7 AM. They got out to the car in near record time and picked me up on the Dose shortly after noon, our scheduled meeting time.

The hike was clearly a great one, loaded with adventure, scenery, and a good visit with some great guys. On the other hand, it was a very sad one for me. I've never been on a trip before where I had to bail out in the middle merely because I was tired. It's taking me a while to come to grips with the aging process.